(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto;

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to address the various problems and bottlenecks mentioned in the news article regarding deteriorating situation of domestic oil industry; and

(d) whether Government are considering a proposal to hike the import duty on vegetable oil to 300 per cent from its present 75 per cent?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (d) The traders Association has requested for reduction in the Customs duty on import of crude edible oil. The Association has also pointed out that the difference in the Customs duty on crude and refined edible oil should be not less than 80%. The import duty on edible oils has been revised upwards three times during the last one year. This step has been taken to provide protection to the domestic producers of oilseeds. However, there is no proposal under consideration of the Government to raise the import duty on vegetable oil to 300%.

Decline in Export Growth Rate

180. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that exports which increased at the rate of about 20 per cent between April, 2000 and February, 2001, came down to just half in February; and

(b) if so, what was the average rate of growth registered during the year 2000-2001, indicating the reasons for the decline and the major areas of exports adversely affected?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) As per the provisional data of

Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Calcutta growth in exports during April—February, 2000-01, April—March, 2000-01, and February, 2001 are as under:

Year	Growth rate in US $ terms
February 2001	10.46%
April—February, 2000-01	20.03%
April—March, 2000-01	19.8%

Export performance *inter-alia* is influenced by international market conditions, export competitiveness of the domestic industry, and that of the competitors in other countries etc. Exports in recent past have been affected due to general slow down in world trade in major importing countries. Areas where sluggish export growth has been noticed during 2000-01 are plantation, gems and jewellery, sports goods, projects goods handicraft and carpets etc.

Export of wheat to Iraq

181. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM:
SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether 23,000 tonnes of wheat was exported to Iraq recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether two wheat shipments were rejected by Iraq;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(e) the loss caused thereby and those found responsible therefor, and

(f) what positive action Government have taken to resume the exports to Iraq?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) A total quantity of 74018 MT of wheat in four vessels was exported to Iraq by three private exporters.

(c) and (d) The consignments were rejected by the Grain Board of